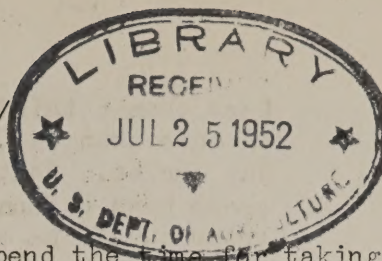


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14.5 Extension Service
U. S. Dept. Agr.
Washington 25, D. C.

3 BUYING FOUNDATION GARMENTS^{1/}



I. Assumption:

Extension clothing specialists can afford to spend the time for taking leadership in providing help on buying foundation garments because:

1. In a poll to State clothing specialists, foundation garments ranked highest on the list of items on which there is need for more information.

II. Objectives:

1. To help homemakers buy foundation garments that fit them well.
2. To help homemakers judge quality in relation to price.

III. Background:

What does the specialist need to know?

Manufacturers and distributors of clothing with a more or less national market may be very much interested in national figures showing income, spending and price trends. The county home demonstration agent and local retailer are more interested in the income brackets of families living in their county or trading area and the market employment conditions there. The specialist is in between and has an interest in knowing national and State facts so she can better help the agent evaluate local trends.

1. Distribution of family income.

In the United States nearly one-third of the families have incomes of less than \$2,000. Of course a farm family with a money income of \$2,000 would have more available cash than a family with the same income in a city. Who are those families with less than \$2,000 in a given community? Are they mostly families with young children, or are they retired couples? To which ones would buying clothes be a money problem? To which families is clothing important socially? Are foundation garments more important to the young homemaker or the grandmother?

More than a third of the families in the United States are in the \$2,000 to \$4,000 income group. Are they the "good customers" in a small town community? Are they the ones that influence the kind of foundation garments the merchant stocks? Or, on the other hand, can a small town merchant afford to stock a line of foundation garments? What is the difference in the way this income group on a farm buys clothes and the way the same income group buys clothes in an urbanized area?

Less than a third of the families living in the U. S. Have incomes of more than \$4,000. They have the most dollar votes in the clothing market. What is the difference in the way a woman from this group buys a foundation garment and the way one from the \$1,000 group buys? Do the higher income groups need help in buying foundation garments? Is it practical to give a demonstration on proper fit, more or less ignoring price? How many homemakers interviewed mentioned buying foundation garments as a problem? Did you see any connection with income? Or with local market offerings? What did the retailers have to say about foundation garments?

Percent Distribution of Families by 1949 Income						
Income		United States	North East	North Central	South	West
Under \$999	-----	15	11	12	24	11
\$1,000 - 1,999	-----	16	11	13	21	13
\$2,000 - 2,999	-----	18	19	19	18	17
\$3,000 - 3,999	-----	20	22	22	15	22
\$4,000 - 4,999	-----	12	14	13	9	14
\$5,000 - 5,999	-----	8	9	9	5	9
\$6,000 and over	-----	12	14	12	8	14

Source: Bureau of the Census (U. S. Dept. of Commerce, Washington 25, D. C. (1950 Census of Population, Preliminary Report, Series PC-7, No. 2.)

2. Trends in income and spending.

As a group, consumers spend more for clothing as they have more to spend. Clothing expenditures are always a big item in personal expenditures. Disposable income more than doubled from 1941 to 1950, as did expenditures for clothing. Prices went up but not as much as disposable income.

In considering this income figure it is well to remember that population increased from 131,129,000 in 1940 to 150,697,000 in 1950, and that the two age groups where the greatest increase occurred were the under 5 and over 75. Though not all families benefit equally from rising incomes, a general knowledge of trends in incomes and prices can help an agent in evaluating comments about prices which often come up in meetings. Clothing prices increased more than the general price trend. Prices of women's girdles followed the price trend for all clothing. National figures would probably be more comparable to urbanized areas than to other areas.

Personal income and expenditures

	1950	1949	1941	1935
Disposable personal income (billions of dols.)	204.3	186.4	92.0	58.0
Personal consumption expenditures " " "	193.6	180.2	82.3	56.2
Clothing, accessories and jewelry " " "	22.9	22.9	10.5	7.0
Clothing, accessories, and jewelry (percent- age of disposable income) -----	11%	12%	11%	12%
Clothing, accessories, and jewelry (percent- age of consumption expenditures) -----	12%	13%	13%	12%

Source: A supplement to the Survey of Current Business, National Income, 1951 edition.

Consumers' price index (1935-39=100) for moderate-income families in large cities

Items	1950	1949	1941	1935
All items -----	171.9	171.9	105.2	98.1
Food -----	204.5	210.2	105.5	100.4
Apparel -----	187.7	198.0	106.3	96.8
Rent -----	131.0	121.2	106.4	94.2
Fuel, electricity, refrigeration -----	140.6	133.9	102.2	100.7
House furnishings -----	190.2	195.8	107.3	94.8
Miscellaneous -----	156.5	149.9	104.0	98.1

Source: Monthly Labor Review.

Index of retail prices of selected articles purchased by moderate income families in large cities of the United States (1935-39=100)

	1950	1949	1941	1935
Women's girdles -----	188.2	177.3	102.9	100.3

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U. S. Department of Labor.

3. Expenditures for foundation garments.

What clues can we get from the Studies of Family Clothing Supplies? More than half the women in the studies bought brassieres during the year and less than half bought corsets and girdles. The average price paid for a brassiere was about \$2.25 and the average price for girdles and corsets was close to \$6.95. How do these figures check with the reports on best sellers from the trade? What are the price ranges in mail order catalogues? What kind of a corset can you get for \$6.95? Or would you interpret this figure as \$4.98 for girdles and \$12.95 for corsets?

We often hear that women are not accustomed to wearing foundation garments. These studies show that more than 80 percent of the women owned them but do not tell how often they wore them or how comfortable they were. What evidences of comfort and appearance have shown up at dress reviews? At workshops on fitting and alteration of suits and dresses?

Expenditures for foundation garments for wives				
	All	\$2,000-	\$3,000-	\$4,000-
Brassieres for Wives	wives	2,999	3,999	5,999
Average yearly expenditures ----	\$2.95	\$2.26	\$3.22	\$4.32
Average number purchased -----	1.34	1.16	1.49	1.75
Percent purchasing -----	56%	50%	66%	68%
Average number owned -----	3.5	3.3	3.9	4.3
Percent owning -----	83%	81%	92%	88%
Average unit price paid -----	2.21	1.94	2.17	2.47
Corsets and Girdles				
Average yearly expenditures ---	\$4.21	2.89	4.37	5.12
Average number purchased -----	.61	.48	.63	.80
Percent purchasing -----	43%	35%	47%	55%
Average number owned -----	1.7	1.5	1.6	1.9
Percent owning -----	85%	85%	80%	87%
Average unit price -----	6.87	5.97	6.98	6.39

Source: Preliminary Report No. 1. Family Clothing Inventories by Income. Minneapolis-St. Paul, 1949; Preliminary Report No. 2. Family Clothing Purchases by Income. Minneapolis-St. Paul, 1948-1949. BHNHE, U. S. D. A.

4. In what price ranges are the best selling brassieres found? The best selling girdles? The best selling corsets?
5. Are there any differences in marketing foundation garments by region? Type of store? Type of community?
6. What is the relation of quality to price? How can the homemaker judge? Do labels help? What types of fabrics hold their shape best and wear the longest?
7. How many figure types should a home demonstration agent know in talking with a group? What is the proper way to fit each type?
8. How can a homemaker judge the fit of a girdle, a brassiere or a corset when she tries it on? How should she measure herself to order by mail? What is the correct way to put on a garment?
9. Is it a good idea to buy a garment if you have to have it altered? How can you tell when the alteration is a good risk?
10. What are the precautions in care? Can bleaches be used on foundation garments without deteriorating the fabric?
11. What are the health factors? Are we taking any risks in teaching the fitting of foundation garments?
12. What are the suggested methods for doing educational work on buying and wearing foundation garments?